triumph or despair? Yesterday & Yesterday ago we dined together
& drank Champagne. Yesterday I was at Cambridge hearing
the Fairy Queen, oh & talking 10 hours at a stretch,
& hearing that Dora Peter has fallen in love with a
married woman & come to blows with her husband
outside the bedroom door. (I met me of the soda water &
whisky have come) I have been driven like a yellow cat
by a pack of dogs. That's my state — pencil, pyjamas,
brushes ringing up. MSS. to read. I should like to see somebody
Jane, wearing white cuffs, somebody frightfully intent on
what's said. That's a quality of yours — attentiveness:
you respect facts; & I said its 6; you wd. compress this by
looking at your watch. I daresay you're too tired to
read any more. So I'll stop, because I feel there
is unhurriedness actually — how many words we have in, & the
incongruity of things, & why should this utter wail (but
there's affection in it & desire to see you) ever reach you,
storm bound as you are, standing at a desk 6 hours ades,
bedding the brethren columns & the blue flowers are in
all orderly. I say, you must remember all your feelings
& tell me. I shall soak drowsily a one day wake with a
start & say That's what Ethel felt in February? And
how are you? Any cold? Ring to-ed? Love - V.

NYPL Rota 7.V.63

march 9th 1931

Monday.

Well Ethel wheres your chapter on Vanity? Surely I might have that--we are never to meet again, I agree. But you have a pen--you have a purpose. Mine is gone utterly. Didnt i say I wanted solitude? What have I got? Oh Lady Oxford, Ottoline, all Leonards family dining, two or thre parties, interviews with agents, with authors, the man come about the elctric light, about the bell that dont ri ring--- heres Roger, heres Clive, heres Miss Pearn with a project, and Mr Simpson again. But no discourse from Ethel on Vanity. I sit under a pall of snow and thin I could write one myself--the vanity of wishing to be lef alone. In six years perhaps I may actually have three days to think in. Never mind. Write me your sane and sensible relfections on vanity. Virginia.

Dame Ethel Smyth

Coign

Woking

Surrey

1931

March 9th

(after long silence)

Dame Ethel Smyth

Coign

Woking

Surrey

March 23rd
1931

22nd March
1931

Marks House
Rodmell

Vanessa says she has chosen Thursday
next for the supper party. — What
time I don't know, nor what
company. But I shall send on the
message as I was bid.
I thought I should feel in the mood
for letter writing between tea —
Dinner, after a walk over the
Downs. But I have wasted the time
reading a Manuscript — the
slow sticky lines of which,
falling on me drop by drop,
has completely extinguished
my love of words. And I

have at least six more to read. When you analyse my moods, make allowance for the ~~fee~~ perversion of bad fiction – do I mean perversion?.

I don't think – though I've left your letter in London – you made out your case against me as a critic. After all, you never liked my work till you liked me: then if I'm too tolerant of Vita's fiction because I know her, why do I set such low, since I know her? And again; I'm only criticising the Early Letters of W.B. which you yourself admit were the product of isolation &

petrified Days. Can you believe in T & T's
New Statesman — no: I think you would
Carry more conviction if you let the Turners
turn in silence. Any answer, any
Explanation, any repudiation weakens
one's case — but so I feel, & so I
act; but I may be wrong. You say
you don't read criticism, & then you
reply to it — on general grounds I admit,
but any acknowledgment of what you
perhaps seems a tribute to the despicable.
There! there is my perversity for you again;
& I daresay as you always point out,
what's well Enough for a writer,
doesn't apply to a musician.

I have been dropping down here, into a
life of Alice Meynell — the lady who
wore ~~yea~~ facets, didn't you say, in her

bath, & on a/c letter remark that she went to Ethel Smyth's new opera, which was a great success, & then to a brilliant party at Mrs. Hunter's. I sat on a long to be there — with magnificent inconsistency. O for curbed about my party — I've no room, & I wd. rather a little talk which oddly proved the violence & incomprehensibility of my mood. I had given a young man a horrid shock, it seems — & he, being rational, read into it all kinds of profound emotions on my part — all I had felt was a violent sweep of anger at being made to talk at luncheon when I wanted, with a passion no one can understand, to eat my mutton in silence. And then my party was spoilt rather, by various queer discomforts at what people said. I'm being bored to death by my London /hem — & not a thought for fear of clouding the brilliancy: & I have had to go over the Thames, front of Lords, on a launch, with the Persian Ambassador — but that I liked — I don't like facts, though. V

NYPL

Rota 2.4.63

Dame Ethel Smyth Lansdown

1) 29th Mar. 1931

2) 1 Apnt "

Craigh Woking

Lansdown

Hotel Surrey

29th March 1931

Sunday. 52 Tavistock Sq.

Just back from the Webbs; & left letter in a
shooter, though I suppose it – hence can't write a
letter. I don't remember saying I wanted a
violent letter – though it's true I was feeling
violent – any letter: you know my tactic.
Why did I feel violent, apln the party? It moved me
amazing to see how far you can make out,
your insight, the various states of mind
which led me, on coming home, today to L: –
"If you weren't here, I should kill myself – so
much do I suffer" (I hate myself for [illegible] nothing)
I wonder how jealous I should be if you preferred
Vanessa to me? Or what? Should I? Ah
I wonder what new light was thrown on
my personality, & why it was disturbing?
I wonder how the ~~Conf~~ group, as a group,

if it seemed to you a stoop. Much fun L.

I wonder — but what the use of wondering? because I don't see how I'm to get an answer. I've got to get in Home & Common & Lords before Thursday. & various people: so that I don't see at the moment any prospect of a quiet time for talk — only for talk perpetually cut up by people opening the door. But should the hubbub clear, I'll telephone on the chance.

V.

Rota 2.4.63

NYPL

52 Tavistock Sqr.

1st April 1931
(fools day)

Well Ethel you are a clever woman, a novelist
wasted if ever there was one, & I could write pages in
praise of your gifts if I could write at all. But
that delightful art I shall not attempt till I
fail at this Flotsam & Jetsam & misery—
ordering Groceries) mean, tearing up bills, & trying to
find lost manuscripts - into the green heaven
where I live, solitary, please be to the Lad, in my
sitting room, looking over the marsh. Among
odds & ends stuck behind boxes I find three letters
which I think you wanted sent. The woman
Woltby doesn't altogether attract me on paper, but
I take your word for it she is not quite so
indiscriminate as she seems.
Where's the bill for the wig?
Write me long letters. In the country - they
unfurl like flowers in water. ∴
The worst agony suffering is that it halts the
scratching of an eczematic dog - Letters they

people say; hands & limbs: there stick in my belt; & not the
curious always of darting. No: what you give me is
protection, so far as I am capable of it. I look at you
& (being blind to most things & apt violent impressions)
think If Ethel can be so downright &
plainspoken & on the spot, I need not fear instant
dismemberment by wild horses. It's the child
crying for the nurses hand in the dark - You do it
by being so unselfconscious - so magnificently
unself-conscious. That is what people pay £20
a sitting to get from Psycho-analysts —
liberation from their own Egotism. Never mind now —
here's Vita coming like a ship in full sail.
I think you're right — we all cry for nurses hands

V.

Let me know what happens, or
has happened, to Mrs Hunter
or Elizabeth.

Rote 2.4.63

NYPL

No big envelope, so the Wolders daughter (that's me) must wait, reluctantly & impatiently, till tomorrow: for the most important, indeed urgent letter, must catch the 11.10 Thurs.

Marks House,

7th April,

Your letter just come, with a great bundle, from London. We go back — didn't I explain our plans? — on Thursday (9th) But Ethel dear, are you really ill.? Why does the Dr: prescribe bed for your ears? I am (in spite of the ossified & rigid heart to which you allude) anxious to know the truth; & more annoyed than you, the ~~Snaker~~ woman who takes me for a Snake, would think likely. Why, didn't I lie awake last night calming myself out of some momentary fear by inventing your reasons for not being afraid? — And I wrote you a long letter by the way, which was all on the theme of the absurd & irrational happenings of our lives — yes, even how Leonard, whose heart is fierce duty with hot iron, is divinely happy now: we giggle & joke, & go & look at roots & plan beds of nasturtium: & altogether, life is a childish happy affair — no reason for happiness, dear me no: but there it is & therefore one never talks of it, I suppose: but only of the other state which can be made to sound reasonable. "I'm the happiest woman in England"

Dame Ethel Smyth

Lansdown Grove Hotel

Bath

Dated
7th April [redacted]

I said to Leonard yesterday, for no reason, except that we had hot rolls for breakfast & the Cat had eaten the chicken. But also the most Egotistical — no I think, with all due respect, Ethel's that. Lord, Ethel, did you think I was ever so blind as to say that you, yak laugh. had Conquered egotism? It is only that you use it so magnificently that one doesn't care if its egotism or altruism — its your Unconsciousness I envy; not your Selflessness. Forgive this drivel. I've been a long walk, have had Nessa Clive & Angelica to tea, & the loudspeaker is louring forth Wagner from Paris. His rhythm destroys my rhythm: yes, that a true observation. ah writing is nothing but fastening words on the backs of rhythm. If they fall off, the rhythm's done. But work I must this evening, because all tomorrow I must be toiling to finish an article on Gosse, whom I hope to hit off smartly, without malice, but without much love either — for he was a crafty, worldly, prosy, artistic little beast — to morrow. I've written & written — so many articles — & to be exact. five on London: one on Mrs Browning; one on Lockhart; one on Gosse; & ah how to be Dandlepered, made to sit, smoothed, pressed, curled, & sent off before we go. We go on the 16th — & dear me, how glad I shall be to wake up in France & not write. Think of being free from 10 to one to sit &

Rota 2.4.63

NYPL

look out of the window!

But when shall I see you? You'll be surprised to hear that I'm in a mood when I should like to hear the particular accent you put on Vir-gin-ia! Shall I come down to Woking one day? Shall we go on with our discussion? I like this feeling that we are in the middle of a tremendous argument – no, discussion: it's not ('seeing' Ethel; it's going on with what we were saying last week – About the person – about women's disabilities; about H B: about death; garden, — oh & Lord I was forgetting' The Mrg: Here is a Cheque: fill it up: I trust you not to increase the sum; not to pay for an extra fine Lombard wig instead of dogs hair British, which I expect yours to be. I know all about wigs: the best are plucked from the Centre mesh of the hair of Italian peasants: the worst come from China — the cheap coarse wigs you see in the pit of provincial theatres, or in Whitechapel on Sundays. Yours, I should say, is a middle class wig; plucked very likely in Croydon from a butcher's daughter. So pay it, there: And that reminds me of your terrific family dinners — what